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August 18, 2025

The Honorable Connie Boesen  
Mayor of Des Moines  
City Hall – City Council Chambers  
400 Robert D Ray Drive  
Des Moines, IA 50309

Dear Mayor Boesen,

It has come to my attention that high school students in Iowa have been targeted for influence operations by an organization affiliated with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The gospel choir, Bridges 2 Harmony (B2H), at Roosevelt High School in Des Moines, recently participated in an all-expenses-paid exchange to China from July 12-21 sponsored by the People's Republic of China (PRC) government and the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries ("CPAFFC"). While seemingly a benign people-to-people exchange, the U.S. government has found that CPAFFC is "a Beijing-based organization tasked with co-opting subnational governments" and "has sought to directly and malignly influence state and local leaders to promote the PRC's global agenda."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the involvement of CPAFFC in this initiative serves to underscore its purpose as a tool for CCP propaganda and malign influence.

Moreover, the fact that the organizer of the exchange required the students to download WeChat—a messaging platform heavily monitored by the CCP that stores and can transfer the personal information of U.S. citizens without prior consent, censor content that the CCP deems politically sensitive, and spread CCP disinformation<sup>2</sup>—in order to participate in the exchange only raises additional red flags about the potential nefarious intent behind the exchange.

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<sup>1</sup> *Designation of the National Association for China's Peaceful Unification (NACPU) as a Foreign Mission of the PRC*, U.S. Dep't of State (Oct. 28, 2020) available at [www.2017-2021.state.gov/designation-of-the-national-association-for-chinas-peaceful-unification-nacpu-as-a-foreign-mission-of-the-prc/](https://www.2017-2021.state.gov/designation-of-the-national-association-for-chinas-peaceful-unification-nacpu-as-a-foreign-mission-of-the-prc/).

<sup>2</sup> *Executive Order on Addressing the Threat Posed by WeChat*, The White House (Aug. 6, 2020) available at [www.trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-addressing-threat-posed-wechat/](https://www.trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-addressing-threat-posed-wechat/).

The U.S. National Counterintelligence and Security Center (NCSC) has assessed that “many quasi-official entities or proxies involved in united front work and foreign influence operations whose ties to the CCP or PRC government may be hidden or not readily apparent” and categorizes the CPAFFC as one such entity.<sup>3</sup> The advisory from the U.S. counterintelligence agency further noted that “CPAFFC is entrusted by the PRC government with overseeing and developing ‘sister’ relationships between China and localities in the United States and other nations.”<sup>4</sup>

The Select Committee has consistently highlighted the insidious nature of sister-city relations with China and how they advance CCP malign influence, and the sister-city relationship between Des Moines and Shijiazhuang City is disconcerting given how the CCP uses these relationships to promote its own interests. In June, the Select Committee sent a letter to the District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser asking her office to review the city’s sister city ties with Beijing.<sup>5</sup> I have additionally introduced a bill (H.R. 4519) that would prohibit our nation’s capital from establishing or maintaining sister city relations with jurisdictions located within foreign adversaries including the PRC.

While genuine people-to-people exchanges are critical for promoting mutual understanding, such exchanges facilitated by CPAFFC and sister-city relations with the PRC are anything but authentic. Instead, they serve as cover for the CCP’s United Front work. As one congressional study found, United Front work is “a Leninist approach to foreign and internal affairs that involves rallying support for Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and neutralizing opposition to its policies and authority.”<sup>6</sup>

The B2H trip is not the only exchange that the CPAFFC has sponsored in Iowa and there are many more of these exchanges taking place across the United States—but it should be the last. The bottom line is that American youth groups should not be used as propaganda tools of the Chinese government. I recommend that the City of Des Moines reconsider its current arrangement with Shijiazhuang City and end its sister city arrangement, as well as cease all

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<sup>3</sup> *Safeguarding Our Future: Protecting Government and Business Leaders at the U.S. State and Local Level from People’s Republic of China (PRC) Operations*, The National Counterintelligence and Security Center (July 2022) available at [www.dni.gov/files/NCSC/documents/SafeguardingOurFuture/PRC\\_Subnational\\_Influence-06-July-2022.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/files/NCSC/documents/SafeguardingOurFuture/PRC_Subnational_Influence-06-July-2022.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> Letter from the Hon. John Moolenaar, Chairman, House Select Committee on the CCP, et. al. to the Hon. Muriel Bowser, Mayor, Washington, D.C. (June 4, 2025).

<sup>6</sup> Lauren Menon, *China’s Foreign Missions in the United States*, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (July 17, 2024) available at [www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/Chinas\\_Foreign\\_Missions\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States.pdf](http://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/Chinas_Foreign_Missions_in_the_United_States.pdf).

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August 14, 2025  
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future engagements with CPAFFC pending a thorough and comprehensive review of the purpose and intent of such exchanges.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



John Moolenaar  
Chairman

cc: Des Moines Public School Board